

House Adopts Nadler Resolution on the Continued Need for Stable Housing for People Living with HIV/AIDS

Monday, 24 May 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House of Representatives adopted Congressman Jerrold Nadler's (D-NY) resolution, H.Con.Res. 137, in support of stable housing as a key component in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The resolution expresses the "sense of the Congress that the lack of adequate housing must be addressed as a barrier to effective HIV prevention, treatment, and care, and that the United States should make a commitment to providing adequate funding for developing housing as a response to the AIDS pandemic."

"If we are to tackle the spread and treatment of HIV and AIDS in our society, we absolutely must address the need for stable housing," said Nadler. "Housing is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Just as advances are being made to extend and enhance the lives of those living with HIV and AIDS, we still have a long way to go in the U.S. in order to make sure that everyone benefits. For those who are homeless or who don't know where they will be sleeping day to day, or month to month, the situation is extremely difficult and, sadly, life-threatening."

Below is Nadler's floor statement in support of the resolution:

"Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of my resolution, H.Con.Res. 137, which expresses the sense of Congress that housing is a key component of combating the war against HIV/AIDS. I want to thank Chairman Frank and my colleagues on the Financial Services Committee for bringing this resolution to the floor. And I call on my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution.

"It is remarkable how far we've come, as a society, in our understanding of the HIV virus. In the early 1980s and well into the 1990s, an HIV-positive diagnosis was seen as a death sentence. But nearly three decades after the launch of a global campaign to study the disease, develop and disseminate treatment, and teach prevention, those who contract HIV now have more than just an elusive hope for the future - they have an actual reality of living healthy and productive lives for decades.

"Today, we have an entire medical, organizational and legislative foundation from which we can provide information, medication and health care to those who have contracted the disease. Yet, just as advances are being made to extend and enhance the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS, we still have a long way to go in the U.S. in order to make sure that everyone benefits.

"While we now have effective HIV medications, there are still many complicating factors in making sure that everyone can get - and successfully use - those medications. These drugs can be very expensive, forcing people to choose between life-saving drugs and other essentials like food, clothing and housing. Additionally, these complex medications often require refrigeration and precise daily routines and mealtimes.

"Successfully integrating these drugs into anyone's life has its complications. For those who are homeless or who don't know where they will be sleeping day to day, or month to month, the situation is extremely difficult and, sadly, life-threatening.

"Study after study has confirmed the connection between the ability to remain healthy after being diagnosed with HIV and access to stable housing. Here are just a few statistics:

- According to a 2007 study in the American Journal of Public Health, housing status is a more significant predictor of health care access and outcomes than individual characteristics, insurance status, substance abuse and mental health co-morbidities, or service utilization.
- Up to 70% of all people living with HIV report a lifetime experience of homelessness or housing instability.
- Rates of HIV infection are 16 times higher among those who are homeless or unstably housed compared to similarly situated people with stable housing.
- Up to 14% of all homeless people are HIV positive - 10 times the rate in the general population.
- The death rate due to HIV/AIDS among homeless people living with HIV is 7 to 9 times the death rate due to HIV/AIDS among the general population.

"The studies are equally clear that ensuring access to stable housing is cost-effective. According to economic evaluation studies done by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, providing housing to those who are HIV-positive either helps to save costs associated with treating these patients, or have similar affects as those associated with kidney dialysis and screening for breast and colon cancer.

"If we are to tackle the spread and treatment of HIV/AIDS in our society, we absolutely must address the need for stable housing. Housing is not a luxury. It is a necessity. And with stable, safe housing comes better health and healthier habits, especially for those living with HIV/AIDS.

"I ask my colleagues to support this resolution so that we can move toward a sound and comprehensive policy for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Thank you."